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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SECOND DECADE TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Letter dated 11 February 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I wish to draw your attention to an unprecedented statement made in the Commission by a member of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic on Friday, 8 February 1991.

In the course of exercising a right of reply, the Syrian representative Ms. Nabila Chaalan claimed that the contents of a virulently anti-Semitic book entitled The Unleavened Bread (Matzah) of Zion, written by the Syrian Minister of Defence, Mustapha Tlas, is entirely true. The book in question is a reaffirmation of the notorious Damascus blood libel of 1840, in which it was alleged that Jews had murdered one Father Thomas and used his blood in order to manufacture the unleavened bread (matzah) which is used in Jewish tradition as part of the celebration of Passover.

Ms. Chaalan's diatribe is thus a modern reincarnation of these infamous allegations which have been rife since medieval times, and raised by anti-Semites throughout the generations against Jews and the Jewish religion.

It would be astonishing, Mr. Chairman, if such a deliberate incitement to racial and religious hatred, in contravention of all international instruments of human rights, were to be uttered with impunity in any United Nations forum. It passes belief, however, that it should be made in the Commission on Human Rights, the very organ entrusted with the task of combating all manifestations of discrimination and bigotry.

I feel that it is incumbent on you, Mr. Chairman, to denounce this statement publicly and unequivocally, in order to preserve the credibility and honour of the Commission.

(Signed): Itzhak Lior
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Israel
to the United Nations Office at Geneva